

Message Text

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17
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1599
INFO /AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 3710
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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN
SUBJ: FARAKKA ISSUE RAISED AGAIN

REF: A) DACCA 3823; B) NEW DELHI 10810

1. REAR ADMIRAL M.H. KHAN, CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF AND
DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, DECLARED IN A SPEECH
IN FARIDPUR AUGUST 5 THAT THE BDG HAD MADE TO THE INDIAN
GOODWILL MISSION IN JUNE PROPOSALS BOTH FOR STORAGE DAMS
ON THE GANGES AND FOR AN INTERIM AGREEMENT ON THE ALLOCATION
OF GANGES WATER ON MONTHLY BASIS. KHAN SAID THAT A
"POSITIVE" RESPONSE HAD BEEN REQUESTED FROM INDIA BY JULY
BUT, HE DECLARED, INDIA HAS "...CONTINUED TO SHOW APATHY
PURPOSELY TOWARD OUR PROPOSAL." NOW, HE SAID, "WE WANT
A SOLUTION."

2. ACCORDING TO BSS, THE GOVERNMENT NEWS AGENCY, KHAN SAID
THAT "STORAGE DAMS OR RESERVOIRS COULD BE CONSTRUCTED...
IN THE 'UPPER REACHES' OF THE GANGES RIVER...AND WATER THUS
STORED COULD BE USED IN THE DRY SEASON BY THE COUNTRIES
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THROUGH WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL RIVER FLOWED." KHAN

REJECTED AS AN IMPOSSIBILITY THE INDIAN PROPOSAL OF CONNECTING THE GANGES WITH THE BRAHMAPUTRA THROUGH A CANAL DUG ACROSS BANGLADESH. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT A "HELPFUL" PROPOSAL BECAUSE IT WOULD "DEVOUR A HUGE AREA OF LAND DISLOCATING A BIG PART OF OUR POPULATION AND ADVERSELY AFFECTING OUR VITAL AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS."

3. KHAN POINTED OUT, ACCORDING TO BSS, THAT INDIA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOLVING THE FARAKKA PROBLEM BECAUSE THEY "HAD STARTED THE WITHDRAWALS." HE SAID THAT "INDIA, WHICH WAS THE UPPER RIPARIAN HAD TO RECOGNIZE THE LEGITIMATE STAND OF THE LOWER RIPARIAN, BANGLADESH."

4. KAHN NOTED THAT PREVIOUSLY FOR THE SAKE OF JUSTICE AND REGIONAL PEACE "WE DID NOT PUT THESE...AFFAIRS BEFORE THE PEOPLE" BUT NOW "WE CANNOT REMAIN INACTIVE...WHERE THE QUESTION OF INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND SURVIVAL ARE INVOLVED." KHAN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH BANGLADESH WAS SMALL AND POOR, SHE IS "UNCOMPROMISING IN MATTERS OF DIGNITY." THE SEVEN AND HALF CRORE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH FROM TETULIA TO TAKNAF "ARE READY TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES BUT NOT THEIR DIGNITY." KHAN SAID FURTHER THAT BANGLADESH WANTED TO CO-EXIST WITH HER NEIGHBORS IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FRIENDLINESS AND PEACE "BUT NOT AT THE COST OF HER VITAL INTEREST."

5. COMMENT. IN THE FIRST MAJOR COMMENT ON FARAKKA SINCE THE GOODWILL VISIT, THE BDG ONCE MORE IS BLAMING INDIA FOR THE LACK OF MOVEMENT TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE FARAKKA ISSUE. CONSIDERING THAT BANGLADESH HAS LITTLE LEVERAGE WITH INDIA ON THE ISSUE, KAHN'S REMARK, "WE CANNOT REMAIN INACTIVE," COMING ONLY A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT AT COLOMBO, SUGGEST THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE SIGNALING TO INDIA THAT UNLESS THERE IS SOME INDIAN RESPONSE SOON, THE BDG WILL RAISE FARAKKA AT THE NAM. THE TOUGH TONE OF KHAN'S REMARKS SEEMS DESIGNED PRINCIPALLY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION.
BOSTER

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